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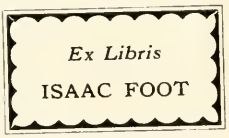

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TWENTY-FIVE TRIFLES IN VERSE

TWENTY-FIVE TRIFLES IN VERSE

BY

JOHN BRAINERD CAPPER

LONDON
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"Trifling enough, I readily confess they are; but I have always allowed myself to trifle occasionally."—*William Cowper, to the Rev. John Newton.*

To
E. S. C.

DEDICATION

I HAVE no garland rare and gay
  My diligence to prove,
But, pausing, gather by the way
  Some little flowers she'll love.

She will not turn from what I bring,
  For all her hand be full ;
She'll cherish for her garlanding
  These simple flowers I pull.

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A CHOICE

I SAW two roses on a tree,
One blown in beauty's pride,
The other budding quietly,
Drooping aside.
I smelled the one; I plucked the other.

I knew two sisters, maidens fair,
One courted, known, admired;
The other, O, a beauty rare,
Lowly, retired.
I praised the one; I loved the other.

THE SILENT HEART

IT is not wooing when the silent heart
Steals pleasure from the fragrancies that cling
To natures rare as thine; it doth not bring
More than a reverent homage, where no art
Or urgency or passion hath a part,
Or rude, unquelled desire. Unconquering,
It feels no victor's exultation spring;
Unconquered, hath not any wound or smart.

Fear thou no wooer! Nay, withhold the keys
That give admittance to the inmost home
Of thy perpetual presence; but let me find
An entrance to those courts and terraces
Where by thy favour I at will may roam,
Free of the outer garden of thy mind.

THE ROAD

THIS common road, with hedges high
Confined on either hand,
Will surely enter by-and-by
Some large, luxuriant land.

The many wayfarers on foot
Have toiled from stage to stage,
And others roll along the route
With easy equipage.

All seek, methinks, that wide domain
Whereon my thoughts are set:
Press onward! Leave the dusty plain!
Hasten! 'Tis farther yet!

And in the end shall great repose
Descend upon my soul,
When, at the eager journey's close,
I reach the sudden goal.

Content, enlargement, fragrance, ease,
Joy in the evening's cool,
The subtle silence in the trees,
The gleam upon the pool . . .

Dreamer! In vain thou hastenest;
That glorious land resign:
Take by the road thy joy, thy rest;
The road, the road is thine.

R.I.P.

THE TIRED JOURNALIST, 3 A.M.

HERE'S the rascal home again,
Heavy eye, forgetful brain,
Feeble finger, leaden foot,
Now may all in bed be put.

Drowsy, dreamy, snug and still,
Let the rascal sleep his fill;
Limp, unfeeling, blind, and dumb,
Heed him not till rousing come.

REMINISCENCE

O BARREN walks where her fine feet have trod!
O idle gates where once she entered in!
O burning sun upon the beaten road
Where when of old she passed would day begin!

Those barren walks unresting feet shall smite,
Those idle gates to hands unheeding turn;
But ever in the sun's false-seeming light—
O heart remembering!—the road will burn.

SUNRISE SONG

HER face is to the sunrise,
Her eyes are for the day ;
No skill or might hath purple night
To steal her looks away.

She turneth to the sunrise
The lifting of her feet ;
The velvet grass wherethrough they pass
Is cool and firm and sweet.

Her heart holds to the sunrise,
She yearns to feel its fire ;
From ages old its red and gold
Have drawn the heart's desire.

Stand forth beneath the sunrise,
O lover of the maid !
She comes to meet the morning,
In morning light arrayed ;

Stand in the flaming sunrise,
Her eyes behold its track ;
No charm or might hath purple night
To turn her gazing back.

IN THE HOUSE OF MY FRIEND

FOR very love I will not look again ;
For love's own sake I gird my loins and go ;
I will not watch the changing sunlight wane,
Its wealth of glory shrunken to a show.

I will not stay till I must learn to dread
The frowning guardian at the outer gate
When paradise is barred : have I not read
In thy deep eyes the slow decrees of Fate?

Close, if thou wilt indeed, thy treasure store ;
I have no words of bitterness or blame :
My steps shall pass again beyond thy door—
Yet not in poverty, as when I came.

Thine are the riches that I bear away,
Unfading visions that refresh my sight,
The shining places where our pleasure lay,
The garden where we found our old delight.

These gifts I hold from thee: henceforth I go
Not too much grieving for the bliss I had:
How should I shame thee with exceeding woe?
Let me but speak thy name and I am glad.

TO A BRIDE

(*Written in a copy of the "Amoretti."*)

SEE how with toil and pain, in lovely wise,
Sweet Spenser wooed his scornful Tyrannesse,
Outfaced the flames of those fair lamping eyes
And turned proud looks at length to tenderness.
Thou didst not show, dear Bride, such cruelness,
Nor labours hard before thy lover set;
He found thine eyes unveiled: their loveliness
Shall he who saw behind the veil forget?
Joy go with thee, and love, and ever yet
More love and greater joy, until thou find
Thou know'st no bitter brooding of regret,
For richness of the years that rest behind.
Through all thy length of days then shalt thou say,
I would not I had known another way.

DISENCHANTMENT

I GALLOPED in a lordly park ;
But now I fare outside :
The night is cold, the road is dark—
A grievous road to ride.

O large and lightsome is the park,
And green and fair to ride ;
But strait and hard and drear and dark
The road that runs outside.

The trees are great within the park,
Oaks old and huge and wide,
Their shadow on the turf is dark—
A noble place to ride.

The shining turf spreads in the park
For leagues on either side,
With hidden dales and hills of mark—
A royal place to ride ;

And cavaliers within the park
  Are gay, and by their side
Under the trees from morn till dark
  The merry ladies ride.

Gay is their laughter in the park,
  It flutters far and wide
Borne on the wind ; wayfarers hark
  As down the road they ride.

I galloped long within the park ;
  Now forth I fare outside :
The night is cold, the road is dark—
  Ho !—what a place to ride.

AN ANNIVERSARY

A YEAR is gone to-day ;
The rugged mountainous months that tore thy feet
And made thee tired to climb,
Through toil and frost and fierceness of their heat,
These hath the vanished year now hidden away
In the transmuting treasury of Time.

Days of desire and pain
That lined thy path, full grown for garnering,
Fell to the Reaper's hook ;
And pale-hued hours of hope scarce ripening,
Yea, and a few that bore rich-fruited grain,
These for his spoil the tireless Reaper took.

But Time shall yield thee yet
Some glad remembrance of thy journeying,
Some gracious gift to wear;
For rugged months and fallen days shall bring
To thine undaunted brow a coronet,
Unfading flowers for weaving in thy hair.

TO LALAGE

Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo, dulce loquentem.

O LALAGE, O Lalage,
Thou sweetly laughing one,
The music of thy laughter
Hath many a heart undone;
To watch the face of Lalage
Would all the world beguile,
There settles round her sunny lips
So ravishing a smile.

O sweetly speaking Lalage,
Thy soft persuading voice
Is what I'd choose were all the world
Wide open for a choice;

To hearken to its music,
The loveliest ever heard,
And listen while those laughing lips
Drop each delicious word.

O Lalage, O Lalage,
Thou sweetly laughing one,
The music of thy merry voice
Hath this poor heart undone.

THE PAGAN VIEW

SO frolic Fate plays with my life and me
As sports the wind upon the standing corn,
Which beaten is and tossed continually,
And always urged but never onward borne ;
By violent gusts assailed, yet still untorn,
It shakes to feel the arch-tormentor's sway ;
Under the sweeping raiment of his scorn
Bends fearful till his footsteps pass away.
So, Fate, I feel thy swift, fantastic play,
That, for thy pleasure, falls upon my life
And turns it to the pastime of a day,
Thy toy, thy sport ; I have no power for strife.
Behold, I make obeisance to thy tread :
O break me not ; I yield, I bow my head.

THE debt incurred
By casual word
Is light, and lightly paid ;
Who'll smooth again
The tangled skein
Left by the word unsaid ?

SICK-NURSE HELPMATE

To E. S. C.

I.

WHENAS I lie on bed of pain
Her steps creep in and out again;
So softly on the floor they fall,
I think they hardly move at all :
O gentle noises, come tiptoe,
More sweet to hear than when you go!

II.

Below the stir the curtains make
I watch her while I lie awake ;
Mine eyes that tremble in the light
Lose her in cloudy dreams at night,
But on the instant when they ope
She's seen ere I have time to hope.

III.

She cools my head and rests my feet
And finds me morsels I can eat,
Makes smoothèd pillow, deftly turned,
Bring comfort to the cheek that burned,
And seeks in some new tender wise
The weariness to exorcise.

IV

The day is long, and all the day
I have not many words to say ;
But still I lie, and faintly bless
The sweetness of her light caress,
Her soothing voice, her soft commands,
The benediction of her hands.

TO A MAIDEN ABOUT TO BE MARRIED

I.

BEHOLD the week begun at last,
Shall see thee severed from the past:
The child shall leave familiar home
And whither beckoned gaily come;
The lamb be led beyond the fold,
Unfearing lest the field be cold;
The little bird desert the nest
For nurture of another breast.

II.

A sudden pause amid the play,
A call afar to come away,
A start, a rising from the ring,
Breaking the merry murmuring:

Heedless of mother's heart bereft,
Father forsaken, sisters left,
Dear traitor to the simple life,
Behold the maid become the wife!

III.

O sheltered boat! under the lee
Of ship upon the uncertain sea;
Fearless, although unskilled to brave
The open freedom of the wave;
Eager and tremulous to slip
The painter from the parent ship!
  Now set your sail, you little boat,
  And ply the oar, you're still afloat.

ROMEUS SPEAKS

O LEAN, dear Love, lean down more near
to me,
And let thy look feed hunger in my breast ;
Search in my soul for that thine eyes would see,
And take thine own, if aught thou treasurest.

Let fall thy hand, that I may dimly know—
Each several finger trembling for a sign—
The strength of that huge sea whose overflow
Pours through thy pulses till they answer mine.

Bend low the far-off heaven of thine eyes,
Unveil and show my heart's horizon clear,
Over my darkness let the day arise—
Nay ! in the night my soul doth find thee near.

There needs no star to steer me to thy face ;
Thyself art fire to guide and draw me there—
My spirit faints before its holy place,
Nor move my yearning lips, though white with
prayer.

BASHFUL FIFTEEN

MARY, Mary,
Coy and chary,
Why do you answer No,
With crimson cheek
And lips that speak
Of a kiss they might bestow ?

SURGE, DILECTA

STAND up and face me ; I'm no boy,
Half tremulous, half bold,
No mummer with a heart too coy ;
The hand I've held, I hold.

I crave no faint delights like these
Of proffered cheek or brow ;
I plant my kisses where I please—
Your lips—your mouth—and now.

POST MERIDIEM

'TWAS morning long ago, and then
The heavens were large and high,
And all the clouds of other men
Were flecks against the sky,
Or floating canopies of white
Far off beneath the blaze of light.

No shadow came across our play,
The paths were set with flowers;
In large possession of a day
The very world was ours:
Sang every bird his merry tune;
'Twas never to be afternoon.

But evening comes, and dusk, to seal
The closer folded skies;
Along the fading paths I feel
The wind of night arise;
The sedges bend to let it pass,
I hear it rustle in the grass.

SONG OF SPRING

SING, sing,
Sing, O my heart, sing!
The merry rain
Hath fallen again
To wash the feet, the pleasant feet, of Spring.

Sing, sing,
Sing, O my heart, sing!
The clouds on high
Sail quiet by
To catch the lifted eyes of gentle Spring.

Sing, sing,
Sing, O my heart, sing!
The woods beneath,
They hold their breath,
Until they hear the bosom heave of Spring.

Sing, sing,
Sing, O my heart, sing!
The flowers blow,
They come and go,
To flush the lovely, tender face of Spring

INCURIA

TO-DAY—or yesterday—
I sent my Love away:
O eyes! O lovely hair!
That caught me on a sudden, unaware;
Slow, soft, enticing touch—
Was ever any such
To liken to it or compare?—
Is it to-day
I sent my Love away?

They lingered not, her feet:
Silent and very fleet,
I found no words to say
Before, unseen, they passed away.

How should my blind heart know
She would rise up and go,
And yield no place for prayer that she would
stay ?—
Unseen, her feet,
Silent, and very fleet.

THY LADY SITS APART

IN summer time thy lady sits apart
Where in the orchard maid to merry maid,
Joyous, with song, maketh high morning call.
But she, thy lady, singeth not at all,
And answereth not, nor looketh forth to see
Wherefore, or in what wise,
The maidens happy be;
Nor when thou comest doth she give to thee
Greeting, or turn to thee her steadfast eyes,
Or raise them to the quiet trees around;
But, gazing on the ground,
Sees but the greenness where her feet are laid
Sun-sprinkled in the softly moving shade.
So sitteth she in summer time apart—
Stay; hast thou tried her heart?

Seek thou thy lady where she sits apart :
Bend low ; stoop close unto
Her delicate hand ; for nearer view
Lift thou her slender fingers veined with blue ;
As a rare gem
Clasp and hold them.

Then shall a marvellous thing
Be shown to thee ere thou be wholly ware ;
For with small tarrying
A strange, new, sudden motion shall surprise
And touch her lips, and take her tender eyes;
And from those fingers fine
A subtle current, flowing swift along,
Shall course through hands fast held in thine,
Her secret ways among,
And mounting shall o'errun her forehead fair
And climb her cheeks to break in colour there :
High in her face the flaming blossoms show ;
Here runs the sap that made those roses blow.
So, when thy lady sits sometime apart,
Thou shalt try well her heart.

ON MOVING HOUSE

THOUGH feet leave now the long familiar track
And walk in strange new ways,
Though eyes look onward, turns the spirit back
And, softly speaking, says—

Not home we leave, nor friends, nor yet forsake
The heart of things proved dear;
These, these we hold, whatever path we take—
Hold now more closely near;

The fellowship of labour past, the share
Of mingled toil to come,
The purpose and the love and hope are there
These be the seals of Home.

A NORFOLK DITTY

A WAY by no man trodden,
Though any man may take,
Leads from the world to Loddon,
Not easy to mistake;
The narrow Chet,
Sweet rivulet,
Will float you up to Loddon.

The tide flows in to Loddon,
It flows and turns again,
Makes all the marshland sodden
Like meadow after rain;
Then Chet,
Deserted rivulet,
Falls away from Loddon.

You make for Reedham ferry,
You leave the Yare astern;
Perchance a quanting wherry
May show the hidden turn :
Any craft that so you meet
Is surely bound for Loddon,
So check your sheet and dream a bit
And look ahead for Loddon.
The gentle Chet,
Fair rivulet,
Will lead you into Loddon.

They tell me there be other roads
Run all the way to Loddon,
By plodding men with heavy loads
And noisy feet betrodden :
If I should meet those dusty men
And see the sign " To Loddon,"
I'd turn me round about again
And leave the road untrodden.
But give me Chet,
Sweet Chet,
Delightful rivulet,
To float me back to Loddon.

THE STRUGGLE

DRIVE down false fear ;
Strive ; hold strong courage high ;
See still draw near
Slow-pacing Victory.
Dost now the bugle hear ?
The Paean presently.

December, 1917.

ENVOI

TENDER, slender fruit and flower,
Nourished near my Lady's bower,
Envying no other prize,
Seek ye now my Lady's eyes ;
Gathered for her sole delight,
Go, find favour in her sight.

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